

PRESS RELEASE

House Armed Services Committee

Duncan Hunter, Chairman

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Opening Statement by Chairman Duncan Hunter Briefing from L. Paul Bremer and Larry DiRita

The committee meets this morning to engage in a rather unusual event. With the help of technology, we will be holding a hearing simultaneously in Washington, D.C. and 6,000 miles away, in downtown Baghdad with Ambassador Paul Bremer, Administrator of the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq.

We also have with us live and in person, Mr. Larry DiRita, Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, who just a few short days ago met me and a group of other members while we visited Baghdad.

The purpose of today's session is to receive an update on the status of reconstruction and stabilization efforts in Iraq.

It's worth noting that just two months have passed since the military concluded decisive combat operations. While that's not a long time in today's 24-hour news cycle, it's an extraordinarily brief period when you consider the size of the task before the United States. Because of that, and the impatience of the modern political process, many have criticized the Bush Administration for inadequate post-war planning prior to Operation Iraqi Freedom.

I personally find such criticism to be short-sighted and ill-founded, particularly following my visit to Baghdad and the northern portion of Iraq. However, today's session will hopefully serve as a useful forum to start getting the facts straight from the field rather than relying on the news media's selective coverage of events in Iraq.

Because of the challenges of conducting today's session via teleconference and the fact that we have Ambassador Bremer until only 10:30 a.m., I will dispense with any further opening statement but strongly urge all members to keep their questions brief in order to allow as many members as possible to ask questions.

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